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# LETTERS

OF

# REV. S. K. LOTHROP, D.D.,

TO THE

## Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church,

WITH THEIR ACTION THEREUPON.

---

*PRINTED BY VOTE OF THE PROPRIETORS.*

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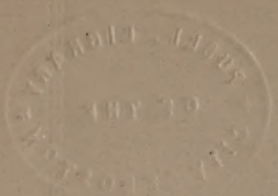
BOSTON:
PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.
1876.



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Henry F. Jenks,
Jan. 12, 1877.

THE accompanying pamphlet was prepared in accordance with the vote of the Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church, at their meeting, November 22, 1876, and is submitted, as its report, by the Committee appointed to carry out that vote. It is taken from the records of the Proprietors, the only changes being the insertion of the original letters, instead of the abstracts made of them by the clerk, and such verbal alterations as were thus rendered necessary to complete the sense or make a continuous narrative.

HENRY F. JENKS,
J. P. HEALY,
JOHN A. DODD,
*Committee.*

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# LETTERS AND RECORDS.

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BOSTON, Oct. 25, 1874.

A meeting of Proprietors, duly convened according to notice, was held at the Church, corner of Clarendon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, after the morning service. Hon. J. P. HEALY was appointed Moderator.

The Clerk then read the following communication to the Proprietors from Dr. LOTHROP: —

12 CHESTNUT STREET, BOSTON,
Oct. 13, 1874.

TO THE PROPRIETORS AND WORSHIPPERS OF THE BRATTLE-SQUARE SOCIETY.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, — I have had more than forty-six years of professional life, have been an ordained clergyman more than forty-five years, and have been pastor of your Church and Society more than forty years. On this 13th day of October, 1874, I reach the age of seventy, — complete my three-score years and ten. These facts suggest and justify the proposition I have to make to you; the condition and interests of the Parish invite and demand it. Long years ago, amid the growth and expansion of the city, I felt that the special work which I was called, under the providence of God, to render to the Church in Brattle Square was to labor earnestly and faithfully, in all the ways that I could, to have the Society hold its own and keep strong and prosperous, till such time as the feeling, the conviction, should become general and manifest, that if the Society would live and go down a religious organization to other generations it must remove to some new spot; and

so that removal be effected without disturbing its harmony. Through your help and confidence this work has been accomplished; by what faithful and persevering labors on my part you must judge. You are now established in a new church, in one of the most favorable positions for material growth and prosperity that could be selected in the whole city. It is, and will be, a great work to build up what must be largely a new society in the new church, even when the embarrassment and obstacles that have somewhat affected us are entirely removed. A man of seventy, though well and strong, cannot be expected to do all the work, meet all the demands, of a position which might well task the utmost energies of a man in the prime or full vigor of his manhood. A new voice, and fresh young strength, must be introduced into our pulpit. I propose therefore, brethren, that at your earliest convenience, and as soon as your judgments can unite upon a suitable person, you settle an associate or colleague pastor to share with me the duties and responsibilities of the pulpit, and to take the chief share in the labors requisite to carry forward the Society to that condition of prosperity which it ought speedily to attain. I make this proposition after the most deliberate thought, and from the conviction that it will bring relief to me, and to you increased service. Should it find favor with you, I shall be ready for relinquishments that will prevent its imposing any heavier burden upon the Society. I present it with profound, tender, and grateful recollections of all your kindness to me; in the blessed remembrance of which I am, in fervent love and sympathy,

Your friend, servant, and pastor,

S. K. Lothrop.

After the reading of the foregoing letter, it was

*Voted*, That a committee of five persons be appointed by the Moderator to consider the expediency of settling a colleague,

and to recommend the adoption of such measures as they may deem judicious considering the embarrassed state of the Society; to report to an adjourned meeting of the Proprietors to be held at the church two weeks from to-day (Sunday, Nov. 8), after the morning service.

*Voted*, That said committee have power to fill vacancies, and to add to their number if they find occasion. The following gentlemen were appointed said committee: Messrs. C. T. Thayer, F. Haven, O. W. Peabody, P. T. Homer, and Abbott Lawrence.

*Voted*, That this meeting adjourn to meet (Nov. 8) two weeks from the present time.

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Boston, Nov. 8, 1874.

An adjourned meeting of the Proprietors was held at the church after the morning service. Hon. J. P. Healy, Moderator. Mr. Abbott Lawrence, in behalf of the committee appointed October 25, then made the following report: —

Mr. Moderator, — The committee of five appointed by vote of the Society on Sunday, Oct. 25, to consider the expediency of settling a colleague, and to recommend the adoption of such measures as they deem judicious considering the embarrassed state of the Society, have attended to that duty, and beg leave to report: That they have had several meetings, and have given the subject their most careful thought and reflection. Especially have they given to Dr. Lothrop's letter, addressed to the Society, that respectful consideration to which it is entitled. Although with some difference of opinion, the committee discussed the questions before them frankly, fully, and, as they believe, fairly and in the most friendly spirit, all actuated by an earnest desire to promote and perpetuate the prosperity and welfare of this ancient Society. Your committee are unanimously of the opinion that relief from our embarrassments must come through and by the pulpit, and in no other way; that a matter so important and so personal to every member of the Society and Congregation as the selection of a colleague should be left absolutely with the society, and that the customary and recognized practice should be followed of declaring the pulpit open to candidates until such time as the Society can unite upon a suitable person. Your committee hope for such good results, by adoption of this plan, as will go far to relieve the Society from its present embarrassments. Your committee, therefore,

recommend the Society to accept Dr. Lothrop's letter; and they further recommend that the Standing Committee be authorized in their discretion to open the pulpit to candidates for admission, in the usual manner.

Respectfully submitted

By the Committee.

The report of the committee was accepted. On motion of Mr. Geo. B. Chase, the Standing Committee was requested to communicate to Dr. Lothrop the grateful feeling of the Society for his long and valuable services, and their sympathy in his present state of health.

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Of this meeting the following statement was sent to Dr. Lothrop:

Boston, Nov. 11, 1874.

Dear Sir, — At an adjourned meeting of the Brattle-Square Society held on the 8th inst., a report was presented from a special committee appointed to consider the communication of the Pastor suggesting the appointment of a colleague, and expressing his continued warm interest in the prosperity of the Parish.

By that report it was proposed that the Standing Committee be authorized to take measures to carry out the Pastor's suggestions as to an associate minister, and also to express to him the cordial appreciation entertained by his parishioners of his long and faithful services, and their best wishes for his future usefulness and welfare.

This proposition, after earnest remarks from several gentlemen, was unanimously and cordially adopted by the Parish. The committee have much satisfaction in accordingly communicating this result to the Pastor, as they do, with the sincerest respect and affection.

Ellis L. Motte, *Propr's Clerk*,
In behalf of the Standing Committee.

Rev. Dr. S. K. Lothrop,
12 Chestnut Street.

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During the winter of 1874–5, one candidate preached; but for the rest of the time, until the summer vacation, Dr. Lothrop occupied the pulpit and discharged his duties.

In June, 1875, the following circular was sent to the Proprietors and read from the pulpit: —

The undersigned, Standing Committee of the Church in Brattle Square, respectfully represent to the Proprietors and friends of this Church that in the erection of our new meeting-house an indebtedness has been incurred of about $95,000; that this is beyond any available means of payment, and constitutes a burden upon the corporation which so seriously impairs its usefulness and efficiency that, unless removed, it endangers the continuance of this ancient and historical religious organization, and will certainly compel us to dispose of our present beautiful church edifice.

The only means which the Society have for paying this indebtedness are the unsold pews; these, taken at a valuation below that of most of the other religious societies in Boston, and on the basis of only $75,000 for all of the pews, amount to about $50,000. But these cannot be sold, and the proceeds applied to the reduction of the debt, because purchasers cannot be found willing to incur the responsibility of proprietorship while so large a debt remains unpaid. It is hoped that, if this obstacle be removed, a sale of these pews may be made.

Your committee have given the subject of our pecuniary embarrassment the most serious thought. Various propositions looking towards relief have been considered with the utmost care and solicitude. Plans suggested by the experience of other societies have been fully discussed, and so far as practicable have been tried, but without relief to our troubles. The committee are unable to propose any plan that promises complete success, and they feel that it is due to you and themselves that they come frankly before you and make a statement of the affairs of the Church, and ask you, the Proprietors, carefully to consider the responsibility of the position. They ask you, who have with them various interests, pecuniary and otherwise, in the prosperity and continuance of our time-honored organization, to say what shall be done.

The situation is this: We have a church property that has cost about $275,000; we owe about $95,000. Of this debt, $75,000 is in a mortgage upon our church. This is now overdue, and payment may be demanded at any time, but will not be so long as the collateral security furnished to the bank holding the mortgage remains unchanged, and while our interest is promptly paid. But this collateral security cannot remain without a change; certain persons, who have long continued to put us in their debt by their generous assumption of the liability, must now be relieved. And, again, we have not the income sufficient to meet the current expenses of the Society and also to pay the interest on the debt.

A plan to remove the whole debt by a conditional subscription has

been attempted ; from various causes this has not succeeded in bringing out a response sufficient to encourage us to persevere in that direction. A much more sustained and effective sympathy with the proposers of this plan must be developed soon, if it is hoped that we can continue to occupy our new church as at present.

There remain, perhaps, other modes of relief, but your committee can suggest only one of two, — either such a subscription as will reduce our debt to dimensions within our ability to support, or else disposal by sale of our church, thereby at least paying our debt.

It is clear that, unless some effective means of relief are speedily found, you will be compelled to witness the disposal of our church, and to consider the probable termination of our organization, — endeared as it is to us all by many family and individual memories and ties, and enriched and valuable to the community by so many historical associations. It would truly appear that a trust committed to us by the hands of our fathers should be peculiarly sacred, and its preservation almost obligatory upon us even to the extent of some personal sacrifice, if we would not seem unfaithful to this trust in the eyes of our posterity.

Very respectfully submitted,

| | |
|---|---|
| J. P. Healy, | John A. Dodd, |
| John Gardner, | J. W. Leighton, |
| B. P. Cheney, | Eben Dale, |
| O. W. Peabody, | Abram French, |
| Charles Lyman, | Francis W. Palfrey. |

Notice. — A meeting of the Proprietors of the Church in Brattle Square, called for the purpose of considering the above statement and to determine what action shall be taken as to a possible sale of the church, will be held in the chapel of the church, Tuesday, June 15, at 4 o'clock, p. m.

By order,

Ellis L. Motte,

Boston, June 9, 1875. *Proprietors' Clerk.*

The attendance at this meeting was so small, that an adjournment was made for a week.

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Boston, June 22, 1875.

An adjourned meeting of the Proprietors duly notified was held to-day in the chapel at 4 p. m. ; Hon. J. P. Healy, Moderator, in the chair. The following letter from Dr. Lothrop, addressed to the meeting, was then read : —

Chestnut Street, Boston,
June 22, 1875.

To the Proprietors and Worshippers at the Church of the Brattle-Square Society, assembled at the Vestry, June 22, 1875:—

My Christian Friends, — I deeply regret the financial embarrassment into which the Brattle-Square Society has been brought; I regret it both on your account and my own. In reputation, comfort, and the pleasant position of the declining years of my life, I may have to suffer and be more directly pained by it than any one else. From the night of the Dedication, which proclaimed the church a failure as a place to hear and speak in, I have had at the bottom of my heart an anxious foreboding of this hour. Had the church been a success, as pleasant to worship in as it is beautiful to look at, easy to speak in and easy to hear in, not requiring for the former a constant and nice care in modulating the voice, and for the latter a constant straining of the ear and of the attention, and both the care and the attention often proving unsuccessful, — had this been the case, the church a success in itself, I believe we should have gathered a large congregation, sold and rented so many of our pews that our debt would have been reduced to such proportions that we could have easily controlled it. But a large debt, and at the same time a church which, however beautiful and imposing its interior, is not satisfactory and inviting to worship in, — this is a pretty heavy load for any minister and for any people to bear. That with this load we have failed of an instant and great success is not surprising. What is to be done? It is intimated that the church must be sold. This is easy to say, but difficult to do. No Protestant society would buy it, with its present reputation for acoustic properties, save at such enormous discount on its cost that they could afford almost

entirely to reconstruct the interior. The Roman Catholics would buy it, and probably will if it is thrown upon the market, because it is admirably adapted to their modes of worship. But from neither Protestant nor Catholic could we get more than $150,000. This after paying our debt, principal and interest, would leave the Society at the utmost about $50,000 to do what they chose with, — either start afresh with a much humbler church, or divide among themselves and dissolve. All this does not seem to me wise or creditable. Better revive something of the spirit of our fathers, and by an earnest effort, to which every one, rich and poor, contributes something according to his means, raise enough to liquidate the debt, or at least so far to diminish it that to meet the annual interest will not be oppressive. In such an effort I will not fail to do my part, and if universal and hearty I believe it would be successful. The next thing to be done is to remodel the character and position of the pulpit and the west end of the church, in such a way (and I feel sure it can be done) as to make the church easy to speak and hear in, and thus become an attractive place of worship. If possible, this should be done this coming vacation. The next thing to be done is to carry out my proposition of last October, and settle a colleague. For this I am ready, as I then intimated, to relinquish the whole money salary that I receive. Naturally, after more than forty years of faithful and acceptable service, I desire, notwithstanding the present financial embarrassment, to retain my *status* and position in this community as Pastor of Brattle-Square Church and Society, till I die, or so long as there is any such Church and Society in existence; and, if it must die, die with it. I do not wish, however, to be an encumbrance or obstacle in the way of the action of the Society. I should like, therefore, to relinquish my salary from and after the first of July, 1875, for fifteen months, and

have leave of absence till the first of October, 1876. The Society can then, without my presence or any interference from me, hear candidates next autumn and winter; and probably some one of adequate power and character can be found, whom they will unite in calling to the pulpit at whatever salary they may choose to give. If, when I return in October, 1876, this is the case, I will permanently relinquish my salary; and yet as senior Pastor give to the Society and my colleague whatever service or aid may be asked or I can render. And if, when I return at the end of fifteen months, no one has been invited or settled, I will resume my duties and my salary: I may return with health and strength very much improved. This seems to me an easy way, and the best way, for the Society to try the experiment of a new voice and younger strength in the pulpit. I make the proposition to the Society, and respectfully ask them to accede to it.

I remain, my friends,

Very sincerely and affectionately,

Your friend and pastor,

S. K. Lothrop.

Discussion followed, in which the various suggestions and topics of Dr. Lothrop's letter were earnestly and respectfully considered; and also other matters relating to the finances and a reduction in the expenses; and the legal status of the Church and Society under the mortgage and other indebtedness; and it was

*Voted*, That the whole question be referred to the Standing Committee, they to report at the earliest practicable date.

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Boston, July 20, 1875.

A meeting of the Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church was held to-day at the rooms of Messrs. Kidder, Peabody, & Co., 40 State Street, at 12 noon. The Clerk showed that it was a legal meeting duly notified,

and read the records of last meeting. Hon. P. T. HOMER having been chosen Moderator, Mr. JOHN GARDNER, Treasurer of the Building Committee, presented his accounts, which had been audited and examined by the sub-committee, and pronounced correct and properly vouched.

On motion of Mr. ABBOTT LAWRENCE, it was

*Voted*, that the accounts, vouchers, &c., be sealed up and placed in charge of the Treasurer of the Church for safe keeping.

Mr. O. W. PEABODY stated that, as to both matters referred to the Standing Committee at the meeting of June 22, that Committee had considered the same, and without report requested leave to refer the questions of Dr. Lothrop's letter, &c., back to this meeting.

On motion of Mr. GARDNER, the Clerk was requested to read Dr. Lothrop's letter, and he did so. Hon. FRANKLIN HAVEN moved that the proposal made in Dr. Lothrop's letter be accepted, and the motion was discussed at length: what would be the situation of the Society if the proposal was accepted, and a suitable person should be found for a colleague, and what would be the position of Dr. Lothrop in that case? What again, as to society and pastor, in case the leave of absence contemplated expired without a suitable colleague or pastor being found? It appeared clear that, under the present embarrassed condition of finances, the Society could not be committed to any continued or definite undertaking; and it was explained that if the proposal contained in Dr. Lothrop's letter be accepted it must necessarily be relative only to his leave of absence and his relinquishment of salary; and with this understanding, Mr. HAVEN'S motion, seconded by Mr. B. P. CHENEY, was passed. Then it was

*Voted*, That the whole question as to raising the necessary amount of money for current expenses, paying principal and interest of the debt, be referred to the Standing Committee.

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The action of this meeting was communicated to Dr. LOTHROP in the following note: —

BOSTON, July 21, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR: — At a meeting of the Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church, held yesterday, your letter of June 22 was carefully considered, and, together with the financial con-

dition of the Society, was discussed at length. It appeared that in its present embarrassment the Society could not be committed on all the suggestions made in the letter. On motion of Mr. HAVEN, seconded by Mr. CHENEY, it was voted that the proposal made in Dr. Lothrop's letter be accepted. This was with the understanding that such acceptation related to the proposed leave of absence and relinquishment of salary. It was then voted that the whole question as to raising the money needed for current expenses and paying the debt, principal and interest, be referred to the Standing Committee. The meeting was then adjourned.

Very respectfully,

ELLIS L. MOTTE, *Clerk.*

On the receipt of this letter, Dr. LOTHROP made arrangements to go abroad, and sailed for Europe, Aug. 19, 1875.

The church was closed for the summer vacation, and re-opened Sept. 26 for religious services, which were held for three Sundays, a candidate supplying the pulpit on two of them; after which it was closed by order of the Standing Committee, the services of public worship suspended, and all further effort to secure a suitable colleague relinquished.

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BOSTON, Nov. 3, 1875.

A meeting of the Proprietors, duly notified, was held to-day in the vestry of the church, at 7½ P.M.

Hon. J. P. HEALY was chosen Moderator.

On the part of the Standing Committee, Mr. GARDNER stated that the church had been closed on account of the financial embarrassment and the small attendance on Sundays, and that the present meeting was called to ascertain the wishes of the Proprietors. After a very considerable debate it was

*Voted*, That a committee of three of the Proprietors be appointed by the Moderator, to ascertain upon what terms a sale or lease of the church edifice and land can be made, the committee to report at a meeting of the Proprietors.

Messrs. J. H. FRENCH, B. P. CHENEY, and J. A. DODD, who were all present, were appointed as said committee.

Boston, March 20, 1876.

The Annual Meeting of the Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church was held at the church, corner of Clarendon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, to-day, at 4 o'clock P.M., Mr. John Gardner, Moderator.

After the transaction of the usual business of the annual meeting, the committee appointed (Nov. 3, 1875) at the last meeting of the Proprietors reported through their chairman, Mr. J. H. French, stating that the committee had endeavored to lease or sell the property, but without success; that they had considered the project of inviting another society to unite with them, but without accomplishing such a result; that the committee had given the entire subject their closest attention, and asked that they be discharged from further consideration of the matter.

The report was accepted, on motion of Mr. Lawrence, and the committee discharged.

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Dr. Lothrop spent the interval between these two meetings, during which matters remained unchanged, in Egypt. On his return to Paris in the Spring, having, during his absence, received no official communication from the Society, he addressed to the Proprietors the following letter:

Paris, May 27, 1876.

To the Proprietors of the Church of the Brattle-Square Society, Corner of Clarendon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, Boston:

My Christian Friends, — When I left Boston, in August last, in conformity with your vote accepting my proposition to relinquish my salary and have leave of absence till the first of October, 1876, it was with the hope, amounting almost to assurance on my part, that the interest due on the mortgage for that year would be paid, and with the confident expectation, of course (no other idea entered my mind), that the money for my salary would continue to be raised, and used in whole or in part in sustaining the religious services of the Church; and that in and through these services it might be the good fortune of the Society to hear some young man of power and promise, whom cordially and with good unanimity they could invite and ordain as the colleague, in whose behalf I could relinquish

permanently my whole salary, and to whom on my return, and to the society also, I might still be of some aid in promoting the prosperity and preserving the perpetuity of our venerable religious organization, — old Brattle-Square Society. I have had no official communication from you, but I know that the expectation, at least, has entirely failed of fulfilment; that the church has been closed, the religious services suspended, the congregation scattered; and that, consequently, I shall find on my return the parish, the religious society, in a worse condition than when I left. I have engaged my return passage for the 26th of August next, that I may reach home a few weeks before the expiration of my leave of absence, and be ready to resume my duties on the first of October, if you wish me to do so. But I am in the dark, and know not what you wish or propose. I cannot explain the closing of the church, and the discontinuance of the regular religious services; nor do I know whether the reason, motive, purpose which led you to this will exist and be in force after my return. As bearing upon this point, let me say, my friends, in all respect and kindness, that as I would willingly, gladly, have remained at home and done my work as your pastor in the best way I could without any salary, or any other compensation save the use and occupancy of the parsonage (and should have made such a proposition, had I supposed that the necessities or interests, or even the convenience of the Society required it), so now I am ready to return and do my work as your pastor to the best of my ability without any other compensation, till such time as you can get relieved from your financial embarrassments and settle another pastor. But to return to the parsonage and occupy it for any great length of time, doing nothing for you professionally, with the church closed, no religious services held, no effort made, no work prosecuted either by pastor

or people, — the latter having a merely *pro forma* existence as a religious society, and the former holding simply a similar relationship to them, — this would comport neither with your respectability nor my own; nor would it harmonize with the convictions all must entertain of the purposes for which the parsonage was bequeathed to us. This closing of the church, and discontinuance of the services of public worship, throws such a cloud over your plans and purposes that, as I have said, I am entirely in the dark. I would gladly be informed what you propose to do, and what you expect or desire me to do. Any expression of your purposes or wishes will, as you must know, receive my most careful and respectful consideration. One thing more, brethren and friends, let me say to you: I have formerly, now eighteen months ago, offered to relinquish my whole salary if the society would settle a colleague, retaining only the use of the parsonage which is intended for the senior, if there be two pastors, and the use of which in my case could be regarded only as a fair compensation for my past services in a ministry of more than forty years, and for such further services as I might still render. In this present communication I have already expressed, and now declare again, my readiness to resume my duties and discharge them to the best of my ability, with no other compensation than the use and occupancy of the parsonage, provided you are disposed, and propose on my return, to open the church or vestry, and to resume there, or anywhere, the services of public worship for the benefit of such members of the old scattered congregation, and others, as may choose to attend them. Let me now add, that if the society will settle a colleague, ordain a new minister, and therein give assurance of an effort and a determination that old Brattle-Square Society shall survive its embarrassments and live in the future, I will, on the day of his ordination, relinquish in his favor the use and occu-

pancy of the parsonage; and, while doing all that I can to aid him and the society, receive as my compensation only the privilege of retaining the official position and professional status which, for an approximation to half a century, it has been the happiness and honor of my life to hold.

Would to God, brethren, that you could see your way clear to make this effort and this determination! I do not forget all the unfortunate circumstances or events that have had their influence in bringing us into our present unhappy condition, — the great fires of November, '72, and May, '73; the panic; the long stagnation in business; our losses in numbers and in property by death; and last, but not least, our new church itself, which the genius of our architect made to cost far more than he promised, and so constructed as to be a failure in the two great properties that should distinguish a congregational church, viz., ease of speaking in it, ease and pleasantness of hearing in it, — I do not forget all these unfortunate events and influences; but must we yield to them, be crushed by them? We cannot expect, we need not attempt, to throw off our whole load of embarrassments at once; but can we not diminish it a little now, diminish it more a few years hence, and so continue till we are entirely relieved; and our successors, if not ourselves, behold Brattle-Square Society fully established in temporal and spiritual prosperity? I know that this can be done only through earnest efforts and real substantial sacrifices: I have no disposition to shrink from my share of these efforts and sacrifices, as this letter must make manifest to you. In all our hearts there should be no stronger desire than that old Brattle-Square Society, inherited as a trust from our fathers, should live. It has been a terrible grief to me, given me many unhappy hours this winter, — the fear, increased by the closing of the church, that possibly it would die. For our own honor in the commu-

nity, for the honor of Christ and his Gospel, let us not permit that death!

With many grateful recollections, faithfully and affectionately,

Your friend and servant,

S. K. LOTHROP.

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To this letter the following reply was received by Dr. LOTHROP from the clerk of the Proprietors: —

BOSTON, June 29, 1876.

REV. DR. S. K. LOTHROP:

DEAR SIR, — Your letter of May 27, addressed to the Proprietors of the Brattle-Square Church, was received by the clerk, and a meeting of the Standing Committee was called by a notice stating the object of the meeting and urging a full attendance. Only three members of the Committee appeared at the meeting. They gave your letter the fullest and kindest consideration. Convinced that it would be impossible, especially at this season, to get together any considerable number of Proprietors, and failing to obtain even a majority of the Committee, they thought it due to you and themselves to state these facts to you plainly. The church was closed last October, because of a lack of sufficient attendance to warrant further continuance of services, or a hope of obtaining pew-rents adequate to meet the interest on the debt and the running expenses of the Society. Since then, the church has been for sale and waiting a purchaser. A committee appointed by the Proprietors for the purpose of effecting a sale failed to get an offer. Then a sub-committee of the Standing Committee was appointed for the same purpose, and with a like result. That the church has not been sold under the mortgage before now is solely owing to the forbearance of the mortgagees, to whom an arrears of about eighteen months' interest is now owed. The congregation is scattered, new connections have been made by many of them. For a long time before closing the church, the Committee had failed to obtain a respectably large attendance of Proprietors at meetings called for the transaction of the import-

ant business. Discouragement or indifference kept all but a few away. In the absence, as without the sympathy and aid of a good proportion of our people, the Committee felt powerless. Still they strove to devise plans to offer to the Proprietors with any reasonable hope of success. None have been found by the Committee, or proposed by the Proprietors. It seems futile to call further meetings. If those called to save the church from sale were unattended, we could not expect encouragement of a proposal to reopen the church and settle a colleague, when, in order to do that, assurance must be given that at least the interest on the debt shall be paid. How can that assurance be given? While we duly appreciate the motives that lead you to offer to relinquish the use and occupancy of the parsonage in favor of a colleague, we also are forced to remember that the terms of the trust on which that property is held compel its use by the senior pastor, if there be one. We submit to you, with the kindest feelings, is it not hopelessly too late to entertain any scheme of a colleague? Could a man be found of the needed character and ability to come to us in our present condition? Supposing such a man found, with capacity not only to sustain, but to build up, a congregation now scattered, weak, and disheartened, how could even a very inadequate salary be raised, in addition to keeping down the interest on the debt? We are glad and relieved that you have written as you have. It is just to you and right to all that you should know all that we know. If the Committee or the Proprietors had any plans, you are entitled to know them. We have none, and, so far as we are aware, there are none anywhere proposed. We are drifting on in hope to find a purchaser for the church for a sum sufficient to enable us to pay our debt honorably. We recognize the force of the circumstances influential in bringing us into this unhappy condition. The last and perhaps the hardest to be endured of these agencies — the unexpected and unnecessary failure of our new church in its acoustic qualities, and its excessive cost — would, perhaps, of themselves have been enough to decide a struggle before sufficiently difficult; but with these, and the unexampled depression in business, our failure was accomplished. It is our opinion, and we believe it is the opinion of the Pro-

prietors generally, that there is no alternative to the sale of the church; and, with however much regret and sorrow we admit it, the dissolution of Brattle-Square Society must soon follow that sale.

In behalf of the Standing Committee,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE, JOHN GARDNER, CHARLES LYMAN.

Very respectfully by

ELLIS L. MOTTE, *Clerk*.

In reply to this letter, after due deliberation, Dr. LOTHROP sent a letter which required the calling of a meeting of the Proprietors; and a meeting, duly called, was held.

September 6, 1876.

Hon. PETER T. HOMER was elected Moderator.

At this meeting the foregoing letter of Dr. Lothrop, dated Paris, May 27, 1876, which had never before reached the Proprietors, was read. The clerk stated that at a meeting of the Standing Committee, at which only three were present, it was decided to draw up a letter, stating to Dr. Lothrop what had been done and the situation in which the Church stood. This had been done, and he read the letter which had been sent. (This was the foregoing one, dated Boston, June 29, 1876.) To this letter the following reply had been received from Dr. Lothrop: —

LONDON, Aug. 9, 1876.

TO THE PROPRIETORS OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRATTLE-SQUARE SOCIETY, BOSTON:

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, — On the 27th of May last I addressed a communication to you, the details of which I need not here repeat. In the answer received from your clerk, I find that there was no meeting of the Proprietors at which this communication was read, but only a meeting of some members of the Standing Committee, under whose authority and with whose approval the clerk made his reply. The substantial import of this reply is that at present the Society is "drifting," and proposes to continue to drift. So far as this is a statement of your purpose and policy, it would not be becoming in me to make any remarks upon

it; but to the following sentence in this reply, viz., "While we duly appreciate the motives which lead you to offer to relinquish the use and occupancy of the parsonage in favor of a colleague, we are also forced to remember that the terms of the trust on which that property is held compel its use by 'the senior pastor, if there be one,'" I feel constrained to object as unsound in principle, and as containing an insinuation that I was guilty of a sham generosity in offering to relinquish what, under the circumstances contemplated, I knew I should be compelled to retain. The clause in the bequest, "or the senior pastor, if there be one," was never intended to work a compulsion, but simply to secure a right to the senior pastor; and as the great purpose of the bequest, viz., to provide a suitable and convenient residence for a pastor of Brattle-Square Church, would still be carried out and accomplished whether the junior or senior pastor occupied it, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts would never, I apprehend, upon any principles of law or equity applicable to charitable bequests, hold that the clause, "or senior pastor, if there be one," was compulsory, or decree that the parsonage was forfeit to the estate and heirs of Madam Lydia Hancock, simply because by a mutual agreement the junior and not the senior pastor occupied it. Be this as it may, the whole purpose of the offers and propositions in my communication of the 27th of May was simply to place myself in a position in which, no longer by any possibility an obstacle or hindrance to any thing the Brattle-Square Society might wish to do, I might still be of some help and render some, perhaps valuable and important, services, if they chose to receive them. But the reply of your clerk intimates very distinctly that there is no disposition to allow me even this privilege and satisfaction. In short, my friends, when I go back to the proposition I made to you under date of Oct. 13, 1874, and

review that and several other propositions I have made, both before and since I left home, and study to comprehend what is meant by the way in which these propositions have been received and acted upon, or not acted upon at all, I am forced to the conclusion that there is but one other step that I can take for the benefit of Brattle-Square Church, and that is to resign. The reluctance which a person of my age must feel to break up the associations of a life-time, to separate himself entirely from a religious society which he has endeavored faithfully to serve for more than forty years, and whose members he believed to be friends whom he was bound not to desert in their trouble and perplexity, — this, I trust, will be a satisfactory explanation of my delay, and make it a pardonable offence, if offence at all, that I did not take this step earlier. I hereby resign my office as Pastor of the Church and Society in Brattle Square, with which I was invested in June, 1834, — the resignation to take effect at the expiration of my present leave of absence. Happy if even in this way I can contribute to the "peace and prosperity of the Church and Society worshipping in Brattle Square," or wherever worshipping, I remain, with respect and all good wishes,

Your friend and servant,

S. K. Lothrop.

After the letter had been read, Mr. Geo. W. Palmer offered the following resolution and votes : —

*Resolved*, That the Proprietors of the Church in Brattle Square have heard with great regret the communication from Rev. Dr. Lothrop, resigning his office of Pastor of the Church and Society. They desire to express their grateful appreciation of his long and faithful services. He has united some of them in marriage, baptized others or their children, stood with many beside the graves of their dead, and been associated in the most sacred memories of their lives; while in his public ministry of

forty-two years he has been the earnest expounder and faithful advocate of the views of truth which they have regarded as the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and has honorably sustained the traditions of this pulpit and the reputation of this Church in this city and community: and feeling their esteem for him as a pastor and friend, and their confidence in him as a Christian minister unabated, and believing that, under his continued guidance, the Society can be relieved from its present embarrassments, they are unwilling on their part to consent to have the connection which has so long united them dissolved while his life is spared.

*Voted*, That the resignation of Dr. Lothrop be laid upon the table, and that he be requested to aid in preserving the Society by retaining the position of Pastor.

*Voted*, That Messrs. HEALY and DODD be appointed a committee to wait upon Dr. Lothrop, and, upon consultation with him, to make arrangements for the resumption of services if they deem it advisable.

Mr. ABBOTT LAWRENCE thought it would be unwise to defer the acceptance of the resignation of Dr. LOTHROP, and moved to lay the resolution on the table. Mr. HEALY objected to hasty action; he favored selling the church and paying the debt. Mr. JOHN GARDNER asked if Dr. Lothrop would expect to resume his salary if he returned Oct. 1. Mr. O. W. PEABODY said it was well understood that Dr. Lothrop had no expectation of resuming his salary. Mr. LAWRENCE said that the resignation was made in good faith, and that not to accept it would be a slight upon Dr. Lothrop's sincerity. He renewed his motion to accept the resignation, which was lost by a large majority.

The resolution was then adopted, and the votes passed.

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BOSTON, Nov. 11, 1876.

A meeting of the Proprietors, duly notified, to hear and act upon a communication from the Pastor, the Rev. Dr. LOTHROP, and for the transaction of any other business that might properly come before them, was held in the church at 3½ P.M.

Hon. PETER T. HOMER was elected Moderator.

Mr. HEALY, from the committee appointed Sept. 6, reported that the committee had had several conferences with Dr. Lothrop, with the result expressed in the following communications from him: —

To Messrs. J. P. Healy and John A. Dodd, Esqrs., Committee of Conference, &c.

My dear Friends, — We have had frank and full conference upon the matter submitted to us. I thank you for the tender consideration with which you have listened to every thing I had to present, and I have endeavoured in a like spirit to receive and think over every thing you have so forcibly brought to my attention. I am sorry that we have been unable to reach a result in which our hearts would harmonize and rejoice. The various circumstances of our position, all of which we have considered, do not seem propitious for the resumption of my work with the Brattle-Square Society. There seems to be no provision made or contemplated for resuming this work in the new church. The action of the Society for the last year and a half seems to indicate a foregone conclusion in the minds of the Proprietors that it must and shall be sold to pay the debt, which, as matters now stand, they owe in small portions to individuals of their own body. This contemplated abandonment of the new church takes out of me all inspiration, all heart for continuing work. I wish to avert it, if I can, by resigning, in the hope that under a new ministry there may be a new spirit, and a strenuous effort to save the church. If I remained, and the church were sold and abandoned, then, with all the memories of the past surging within me, with all the reasonable hopes with which we removed to Commonwealth Avenue utterly crushed and blasted, I should be entirely unfit for any new enterprise that might be inaugurated. The past would be too strong in me, and the future is to me too short for any thing of the kind. It is better for the Society, and better for me, that I should be out of it. Influenced by these considerations, I have felt compelled to address the accompanying letter to the Society, which I enclose to your care rather than to the

Clerk, because as the appointed Committee of Conference you seem to be the more appropriate channel of communication. Will you do me the favor to bring it before the Society at as early a day as can be found convenient? I beg leave to say that, after spending a few weeks with my children in Milton, I have gone back to the parsonage, putting one or two rooms in such condition that we could live in them, in order that by being constantly in the house I might look over my books, and goods, and chattels, — the accumulation of more than forty years, — and see what to dispose of, and what to retain and remove to some smaller quarters. The Society, I doubt not, will give me ample time to do this quietly and leisurely, without the hurry that would involve mistake, confusion, and loss. Assured that, while the official tie between us may be broken, the tie of affectionate regard and respect will remain unbroken, I am, very sincerely,

Your friend,

S. K. Lothrop.

Boston, Oct. 13, 1876, 12 Chestnut Street.

To the Proprietors of the Church of the Brattle-Square Society.

My Christian Friends, — Your action on my letter of resignation, at a meeting held on the sixth of September, and communicated to me by your clerk under date of the eighth of that month, has filled me with the deepest gratitude and satisfaction. Your resolutions are an endorsement of the fidelity and usefulness of my long ministry among you, and the expression of your desire that I should remain your pastor and resume my ministerial work is equivalent to a declaration that the present unhappy and embarrassed condition of the Society is not the result of any failure, mistake, or negligence on my part. It is not for me to say that such a declaration was due to me; but it is for me to

thank you, which I do with all my heart, that in your loving kindness and sincere regard for me you have made this declaration with such distinctness and force. This takes the bitterness out of my sorrow, and leaves only a very tender and sympathetic regret for the unfortunate circumstances in which as pastor and people we find ourselves placed. My first impression after reading your resolutions was that I would joyfully put on the harness again and go to work, as you desired, and as your Committee of Conference have earnestly urged; but after a full conference with that Committee, and a thorough review of the events of the last two years and the present position of the Society, my mind now rests sadly but calmly in the conviction, that it is better for you and better for myself that I should stand by my resignation, and respectfully ask you to accept it. I am very sorry thus to place myself in opposition to the wishes of the kind and loving friends who voted with such unanimity for the resolutions passed on the sixth ultimo, but my judgment compels me to do it. I cannot but think and feel that the congregation that worshipped in the new church during the winter of 1873–4 and 1874–5, — embracing some eighty families, occupying some seventy pews, representing in their aggregate property some ten or twelve millions of dollars, — is now scattered beyond my power to bring them together again. It was virtually broken up by the closing of the church and the suspension of the services of public worship in October, 1875. Many now connected with other religious societies where they are well satisfied, and retaining, I trust, a warm affection and respect for me as I do for them, would not be disposed to return to a church heavily encumbered with debt, or to a ministry, however dear to them, which was resumed under circumstances that could give little promise of permanence or success. The only proper place, I think, for the Society

to resume the services of public worship is the church, and to resume them there under a direct vote of the body by whose authority the church was closed and those services suspended. But even then we can only expect a part of the old congregation to come together; and my voice is too familiar in this community, and whatever my health or strength, "the almanac is too decidedly against me," and all my ways and modes of thought and action in the administration of the Gospel are too conservative and old-fashioned, to allow the hope that many new persons of the younger generations would join us. For a few Sundays there might be quite a gathering and a lively interest felt, but without the inspiration that would come from a solemn and determined purpose to retain possession of the church, diminish its debt, remodel, if only partially at first, its interior, make it an agreeable and inviting place of worship, and so preserve and perpetuate the Society there on the new spot we selected and consecrated; nay! without the prospect of a speedy sale of the church, so that, master of whatever sum remained after paying the debt, we might take that and build a less costly church elsewhere, — without the inspiration that would come from this purpose or prospect, the interest in the resumed services would soon subside, and the congregation, animated by no definite plan or purpose, would gradually grow smaller and smaller; and after two or three months it might be thought best to discontinue again the services of public worship, and I should be left a pastor without a congregation to preach to, and to occupy a parsonage without the Society or myself rendering any of that direct service to the religious interests of the community for which that parsonage was devised to us. Brought to this, which closely resembles the present condition of things, I should have again to offer my resignation; but it could not be offered or accepted then with the honor

and comfort both to yourselves and to me, that it can be now.

My friends, I think that Brattle-Square Society ought to be preserved where it now is, in that new church, on that new and splendid spot to which we removed it. Any other result will bring sorrow to ourselves, and to many outside our own body. The sale of the church is talked of, proposed, attempted; but the day on which the sale becomes an accomplished fact will be a day of sorrow and humiliation, deeper I fear than we now realize. Would to God that even now it could be averted by the inspiration of a solemn purpose to hold it, and by degrees pay for it! Were you strong enough to say, "This shall be done!" and so make a small beginning in a direction that would lead to that end, there is no effort or sacrifice or self-denial that I would not willingly have shared with you in making and enduring, to aid in the accomplishment of that end. You have not felt, and do not now feel, strong enough to say and do this; but perhaps a new minister might become an inspiration and a power to give you the strength needed, and I wish to give you what I supposed my various propositions, made before my letter of resignation was sent in, had already given you, — the unobstructed opportunity, if you choose to improve it, of ascertaining whether this be so or not. Should this experiment not be tried at present, or fail, and Brattle-Square Society be severed from its new church, it need not die. Nay, I think it will not die, for corporations that have some property never die, at least they die hard; and this Society having some property will survive, even though it be through some years of tribulation and of struggles requiring all the energy, faith, and perseverance that any society of earnest Christian men and women can exhibit. Something will remain after the debt is paid by the sale of the church, and with this sum, whatever it may be, and with the parsonage,

and with a new place of worship, and with the new people who would gather in to hear a new minister, the old organization can be preserved and perpetuated; and though there may be some temporary break in its traditions, and in the prominent place among our religious societies it has held for a century and a half, yet these may be recovered, and Brattle-Square Society live and flourish as of old, — a power for good in this community. I pray God most earnestly that this may be! I should rejoice to see it prosper. I am deeply grieved at its present embarrassed position; but the best service I can now render it is to close its present ministry. This is not such an ending of that ministry as I fondly anticipated, nor such as I had good reason to anticipate up to that test-hour of the new church, — the services at its Dedication; but it is the ending which the Divine Providence seems to make for me, and calls me to meet with Christian cheerfulness and fortitude. Brattle-Square Society has filled my heart and life for many long years: I can never forget it, or live but to say, "God bless it!" I hold in my memory, and shall ever hold there, all its members, the living and the dead, with whom I have been held in the bonds of an intimate and blessed friendship. But with all the light that earnest prayer and the calmest judgment can throw upon my path of duty, I am brought to believe that it is wisest and best that I should withdraw entirely, and leave you and your pulpit absolutely free. Therefore, my friends, in all gratitude and affection, and with unabated interest in your temporal and spiritual welfare, I must ask you to accept my resignation. Ceasing to be your pastor, I shall ever remain tenderly and faithfully

Your friend,

S. K. Lothrop.

Boston, 12 Chestnut Street,
Oct. 13, 1876.

On motion of Rev. HENRY F. JENKS it was

*Voted*, That Dr. LOTHROP'S letter be referred to a committee composed of Messrs. HEALY, DODD, and CHENEY, to consider what action should be taken on it, and report at an adjourned meeting to be held at the rooms of the Christian Union, Boylston Street, on Wednesday, Nov. 22, at 3½ P.M.

On motion of Mr. T. Q. BROWNE the name of Rev. H. F. JENKS was added to this committee.

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BOSTON, Nov. 22, 1876.

An adjourned meeting of the Proprietors, duly notified, was held to-day, at the rooms of the Christian Union, Boylston Street, at 3½ P.M.

Hon. PETER T. HOMER, Moderator, in the chair.

Mr. HEALY presented the report of the committee appointed at the last meeting, as follows: —

The Committee, to which was referred the communication of Rev. Dr. LOTHROP to the Proprietors of the Church of the Brattle-Square Society, dated Oct. 13, 1876, beg leave to report, that they cannot but admit the force of the arguments which lead him to decline compliance with the request in their votes of Sept. 6, and to urge upon them the acceptance of his resignation. At the meeting of Sept. 6, the general conviction seemed to be that the magnitude of the difficulties in the way rendered it practically impossible to make successfully the necessary effort to secure the means to relieve the Society of the burdens that press upon it; and that the only hope of its preservation lay in the sale of the new church edifice, while the members in a smaller place and humbler way waited the coming of a brighter day. They are not insensible of the lack of inspiration that this conviction causes. They understand his desire to have the present church edifice preserved by the Society, and his unwillingness to have it seek a new religious home; and appreciate the spirit which prompts him to say that, to secure the one and prevent the other, there is no effort, or sacrifice, or self-denial he would not have shared or endured. They feel that he has made every possible effort to aid the Society to free itself from its embarrassments, and that no charge of deserting his friends can be brought against him. To his own clear and candid

statement of the situation they can add nothing. With the deepest regard for him, with a full sense of the spirit of self-sacrifice which prompted his generous offers, with the profoundest regret at severing the tie which has so long united him and the Society, they feel that the wishes expressed by him in the communication referred to them ought to be considered, and he freed from a burden and care which a man in the full prime and vigor of life might be reluctant to bear, but from which they know he would not shrink, did he not feel that his years render it difficult for him to engage with enthusiasm in what must be, practically, rebuilding the old, or rather constructing a new, society; and are, therefore, reluctantly compelled to recommend an acquiescence in his decision. They offer the following votes and resolution for the consideration of the Society: —

*Voted*, That the Proprietors of the Church in Brattle Square reluctantly accept the resignation of their Pastor, the Rev. Samuel K. Lothrop, D. D.

*Resolved*, That, in so doing, they desire to reiterate their sense of his fidelity as a Christian minister, their esteem and affection toward him as a friend, their respect for him as a citizen, expressed in the vote at the meeting at which his resignation was tendered and declined; and at the same time to acknowledge the generosity which has marked his various offers for the relief of the Society in its embarrassments, and their regret that the failure of all attempts in that direction has seemed to leave him no alternative but to insist upon this course. They had hoped that only death would sever the bond between them, but they cannot be insensible that duty to him requires them to respect his decision. Though the official tie which binds them with him be broken, his place in their hearts will not be lost. While he lives, he may feel the assurance of their affectionate regard, of their interest in his prosperity, of their prayer that health may be continued to him, that he may experience the choicest blessings of the Divine love; and that, in the peace and serenity of a tranquil old age, secure in the affection of friends, and the respect of this community in which he has so long held an honored place and done so much efficient service, and the love of those in whose behalf his youth

and manhood have been spent, he may find much to reconcile him to the ways of Providence, by which the work to which his life has been consecrated is brought to a close.

*Voted*, That Dr. Lothrop be invited to continue to occupy the Parsonage house so long as he may do so without a violation of the conditions under which it is holden by the Society.

J. P. Healy,
John A. Dodd,
B. P. Cheney,
Henry F. Jenks,
} *Committee.*

It was voted, that the report of the committee be accepted and entered on the records, and a copy of the same be transmitted to Dr. Lothrop.

The resolution and votes were then read in their order and adopted.

On motion of Mr. Jenks, it was

*Voted*, That a committee of three be appointed by the Chair to print the communications addressed to the Proprietors by Rev. Dr. Lothrop, between Oct. 13, 1874, and Oct. 13, 1876, inclusive, with such portions of the records and correspondence with him as shall show the action of the Society on his various propositions; to be distributed as the committee shall deem advisable. Messrs. Jenks, Healy, and Dodd were appointed by the Chair as this committee.

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